



G-5's "Eye on AMC" **U.S. Army Materiel Command**

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Picatinny managing purchase of new howitzers for Army, Marines

Picatinny's joint-service program office recently completed the development and is managing the purchase of 495 new lightweight 155mm howitzers for the Marine Corps and the Army, a spokesperson for both services recently announced.

A \$843 million four-year contract was awarded to BAE Systems, Barrow-in-Furness, UK, to manufacture the weapons and 94 digital fire control retrofit kits, according to Jim Shields, deputy program manager for the lightweight 155mm howitzer program. The howitzer is known as the M777A1 in the services' inventories.

"The M777A1 will replace all of the Corps' current M198 towed howitzer and will be the artillery system for the Army's Stryker Brigade Combat Teams," Shields said.

The first ground combat system to make extensive use of titanium in its major structures, the M777A1 is 7,000 pounds lighter than the weapon it replaces. The new howitzer is transportable by the Marine Corps' MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft.

Currently, BAE Systems is manufacturing 94 howitzers under a low-rate initial production contract, Shields said. The first 94 weapon systems will be equipped with an optical fire control system that will be upgraded to incorporate digital fire control under the full production contract. All 495 full-production units, also known as towed artillery digitization, will be manufactured with digital fire control systems.

According to Shields, the weapon underwent a successful joint service operational test during October 2004 at Twentynine Palms, Calif. During this four week test, nearly 12,000 artillery rounds were fired by four M777A1's. The system demonstrated excellent reliability, met or exceeded all of its operational requirements, and a team of independent evaluators determined that the M777A1 was both operationally suitable and effective.

Soldier innovations sought to improve field conditions

The Soldier Innovation Initiative is seeking resourceful equipment ideas from Soldiers who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Natick Soldier Center's Operational Forces Interface Group at the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center in Natick, Mass. began the effort in January 2004 to capture Soldier-modified equipment in the field as well as identify new equipment made from materials available to Soldiers that they have creatively exploited.

The project's goal is to discover successful field-expedient ideas, prototype the best ones for further evaluation, and potentially influence the development process to field new or improved equipment.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and units of the 82nd Airborne Division deployed in Afghanistan, offered some ideas that have emerged from this program including: a map pocket sewn into the inside of a patrol cap, a modified sling that allows the M-4 carbine rifle to hang in a ready position, a commercial earpiece for Soldier Intercom for better integration with helmet, and golf bag straps attached to the assistant machine gunner's bag to carry the M-240B machine gun in a ruck configuration.

For more information, visit the website at: <http://www.natick.army.mil>.

Did you know ...

Gen. Benjamin Griffin promoted both Brig. Gen. William "Mike" Lenaers, commanding general of the TACOM Life Cycle Management Command and Brig. Gen. Jerome Johnson, commanding general of U.S. Army Field Support Command to the rank of major general April 15, during two different ceremonies.

The AMC will participate in Public Service Recognition Week, which is an annual event designed to honor people who serve in America's federal, state and local governments, May 5-8 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.. AMC will display various items such as the Stryker Virtual Reality Ride; the Talon Robot: improved armor technology, night vision goggles and a veterans medals display.